

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 11673 261649Z

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 EUR-25 DRC-01 /142 W

----- 027169

R 261145Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 482

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS BEIRUT 11673

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: ELF PRESS CONFERENCE IN BEIRUT

REF: BEIRUT 10265

SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE HERE, ERITREAN LIBERA

-

TION FRONT (ELF) SECGEN HAS REITERATED FRONT'S WILL-
INGNESS TO HOLD NEGOTIATIONS WITH ETHIOPIAN GOVT,
BUT WARNED THAT ANY DELAY IN GRANTING ERITREAN
INDEPENDENCE WOULD RESULT IN INCREASED FIGHTING AND
ISOLATION OF ETHIOPIA. SECGEN SAID ERITREAN CAUSE
HAS BEEN ATTRACTING WIDER INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. HE
ALSO PROPOSED MTG BETWEEN ELF REPS AND ETHIOPIAN
DEL AT NY UNDER UNSYG SUPERVISION. END SUMMARY.

1. AT SEPT 25 PRESS CONFERENCE IN BEIRUT, ELF SECGEN
OTHMAN BEN SALEH, REITERATED ELF'S UNWILLINGNESS TO
LAY DOWN ARMS UNTIL ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE IS ACHIEVED.

HE AGAIN STRESSED ELF'S WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 11673 261649Z

NEGOTIATIONS WITH ETHIOPIAN GOVT WITHOUT DELAY, BUT

WARNED THAT ELF'S INCREASING COMBAT CAPABILITY WOULD ALLOW IT TO CUT OFF ETHIOPIA" FROM RED SEA IF A SERIOUS FORMULA FOR NEGOTIATIONS IS NOT REACHED DURING NEXT SIX MONTHS."

2. ACCORDING TO BEN SALEH, AN ELF DELEGATION HAS BEEN VISITING ITALY, ALGERIA, TUNISIA, LIBYA, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, IRAQ, AND SUDAN IN EFFORT GAIN WIDER INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN CAUSE. IN REPORTING FAVORABLE FOREIGN REACTIONS, HE STATES SUDANESE GOVT NOW UNDERTAKING "ACTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE" IN TRYING START NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ELF AND ETHIOPIAN GOVT. BEN SALEH ALSO REFERRED TO SAUDI ARABIA'S "READINESS TO UNDERTAKE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES . . . TO ESTABLISH A JUST PEACE IN ERITREA." BEN SALEH SAID ELF CONTACTS WITH ARAB LEAGUE AND OAU WERE ALSO BEING PURSUED.

3. FINALLY, AS "PRACTICAL STEP" TOWARD "REAL" SOLUTION FOR ERITREAN PROBLEM AND FOR ETHIOPIA, "WHICH IS THREATENED WITH INTERNAL DIVISION," BEN SALEH PROPOSED PRELIMINARY MTG BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN DEL HEADED BY GOE FONMIN AND ELF DEL BE HELD AT UN HQS. UNDER SUPERVISION OF UNSYG.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE TALKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT11673
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740272-0267
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740913/aaaaaklr.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BEIRUT 10265
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinjw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 JUN 2002 by maustmc>; APPROVED <04 FEB 2003 by martinjw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELF PRESS CONFERENCE IN BEIRUT
TAGS: PINS, ET, ELF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005